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The TAMRAPARNIMAHATMYA is an ancient text belonging to the genre of 'holy legends' of a particular holy cite. Composed of 64 chapters it describes the origin, the various divine deeds that were performed on its bank throughout. The festivals of different temples, the description of the 64 hoiliest spots (ghat-s) on its bank are also delineated. It forms part of the Sivapurana, a voluminous text.

The flora- and fauna of the various places on the river bank also find a place in the text.

It is of very great importance for the devouts, for researchers on holy legends connected with a particular river.

Among the available texts of this type the TAMRAPARNIMAHATMYA seems to be the largest and has many manuscript copies spread over a wide area in south India as well as in the south-western parts such as Kerala and Mangalore.

A sort of edition with Tamil translation was attempted at the beginning of 20th century but only a fragment has been published.

A critical edition based on the available collection of manuscripts along with a detailed summary in Tamil as well as in English will be of great help for the study of this 'cultural texts' that throw great light on people's belief and practices entirely based on a river.

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TĀMRAPARṆĪMĀHĀTMYAM: A first critical edition based on many important manuscript sources

Next to the four Veda-s come the purāṇa-s which are truly called the 'fifth Veda' as expressed in the old saying पुराणं पञ्चमो वेदः. These purāṇa-s traditionally divided into mahāpurāṇa and upapurāṇa are eighteen respectively in each catgory. They have served as the strong foundation for the spread and propagation of supreme devotion, Vedic ideals of life and the spread of culture among the common men throughout the land of Bharata. Moreover these purāṇa-s are one of the oldest records of many different systems of philosophy, festivals, etc. They contain in them many number of devotional hymns, innumerable legends, etc.

One of the many themes that is very important for the spread in the vast Bhāratadeśa is the 'sthalamāhātmya'or the 'sthalapurāṇa' as it is popularly known. Be it the sixtyfour most ancient śaiva holy places called in the śaivāgama-s 'aṣṭāṣṭakṣetra' or the twelve jyotirliṅga-s or the holiest of the holy kṣetra, the Kāśī or any other holy river, the Gaṅgā, or the Kāverī all of them and many more are highly eulogised in the Purāṇa-s especially in the sthalamāhātya section.

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Generally these māhātmya-s can be divided broadly into sthalapurāṇa and the tīrtha or nadīmāhātmya-s. Those that speak highly of the holy rivers such as the Gaṅgā, Kāverī also depict in detail the holy places situated on the banks of these rivers.

One such important nadīmāhātmya text is the Tāmraparṇīmāhātmya (TPM). This text was once very well known and was recited regularly by the devotees. But unfortunately, like many texts of that genre, was neglected by the erudite as well as the devotees for quite some time. But we have the testimony of many manuscripts spread over different parts of Tamilnadu and a printed text with Tamil translation published at the beginning of the last century.

- The Text

This text of TPM contains 64 chapters (adhyāya-s). According to the colophon it forms part of the śaivapurāṇa. It is in the form of an interlocution between the great purāṇa reciter, Sūta who was asked by the assembly of sages in the holy Naimiśa forest about the greatness and the glory of the origin and other related matters pertaining to the river Tāmraparṇī. Among the available 'holy legends' on any river in the country, TPM is the largest one.

The 64 chapters are of varying size. The only printed text available contains all the 64 adhyāya-s and the corresponding Tamil translation. It has been edited by A. R. Ganapati Sastri who says in the preface that he had obtained a copy of the manuscript from the library of the king of Tiruvanantapuram

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and compared it with his own manuscript. He also says that he had ventured into this big task although he did not possess enough knowledge and financial means only with the sole aim of disseminating the great knowledge contained in this text o one and all—to women and uneducated youngstres—so that a strong faith in the high ideals expressed in this text is instilled in their minds and theyemain ever devoted to the ideals of sanātana dharma.

Just as it was felt so hundred years ago by the venerable editor it is all the more essential today that this text is once again edited and published in order to tide over the onslaught of materialism and disbelief on the most ancient sanātanadharma nowadays.

A critical edition of this text is necessay because the printed text needs much correction and improvement; the readings are to be verified and improved. Further, we have now more number of manuscripts available for collation and I sincerely hope that we can very well bring out an excellent edition of the text of the Tāmraparṇīmāhātmya on the basis of all of them. Interestingly we have a manuscript written in the Tulu (Tigalari) script that was in vogue in the southern districts of Karnataka such as Mangaluru, Udupi, etc. This shows the popularity of this text even in he regions beyond Tamilnadu.

- Supposed Duration for the critical edition with Tamil and English translation:

The text TPM contains approximately 3500 anuṣṭubh verses.

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We have nearly 25 manuscript sources. Of them, we will have to select the better ones based on theircondition, etc. and use them for collation.

The edited text will have notes on variant readings, and related matters as foot-notes.

There will be a summary (more detailed) of adhyāya-s in Tamil as well as in English

The final volume will have the half-verse index; a list of the 64 tīrthaghaṭṭa-s, etc. will also be added as appendix.

- Tentative schedule

The first volume containing approximately 1000 verses will be made raedy by October, 2012.

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